1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

35. JOINT RESPONSIBILITY OF NEIGHBOURS

Mwaikambo (chief).

624 621 837 'In former times people did not live at peace as we do now. Because they fought frequently they never were friendly with those of other villages as they are to-day. The occasion for beginning a fight was usually a dispute over women or cattle. If a man had made love to a woman of another village he got a friend to steal her for him. Then if the "owners" of the woman saw them they told their chief that men of such and such a village had run off with "their wife". Their chief allowed all his people to go to recapture "their wife". Also those who had stolen the woman told their chief that they had a case against them, they had stolen someone's wife. Then the chief replied that they should tell everyone to be ready.'

Mwenyaunda (old pagan man).

628 621 672 685 'In the old days if one man A, had "eaten" the cow of another, B, living in a different chiefdom, and failed to repay it, though B came frequently to claim his cow, and if the wife of a village neighbour of A visited in B's country, B might seize her and take her to his chief, saying: "This woman is the wife of C, a neighbour of A, who has 'eaten' my cow:" Then the chief sent to the chief of A's country, saying that they had caught the wife of C and they wanted the cow due from A. Then A would send the cow and B would send back the wife of C with a bull to say: "Thank you, you have settled my case." Then the husband, C, might demand a hoe as well. If A denied his debt when the message came, and asserted that B's friends had seized the woman without cause, his chief would send him to B's chief, saying: "My man denies the charge. Let them drink *umuafi*." Then A and B would take the ordeal in B's country.'

[p. 266]

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Nyakyusa

Age-villages continued to form a chiefdom under the hereditary chief, *mwalyolo*, but active co-operation between villages (not associated via their chief) tended in the larger chiefdoms there commonly existed considerable animosity which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The integrity of these larger chiefdoms was weak - for example, when the Nyakyusa were attacked by Ngoni and Ngoni war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chiefdom conspicuously failed to join in common defence. Similarly the land affairs of one village were no concern of any other, and each jealously guarded its own rights.

Power of the chiefdoms was large; constraint of rank in typical of Nyakyusa political organization and social attitudes. In 1912 the smallest indigenous chiefdom contained only 36 men. In 1948 11,700 people were divided amongst about 18 indigenous chiefs, but undoubtedly half was the Colonial Government frozen the system there would have been rather more - at least five more. Today there are 12 recognized "administrative chiefs", amongst whom five have each less than 3,000 people under them, and the largest chiefdom contains fewer than 10,000 people - the average is just over 4,000 people.

Nevertheless the chiefdom, the collection of villages, was important, because in the creation of the chiefdom villages were created, and in its development the villages developed, matured and died away. A village survived only so long as its members lived and by the nature of the age-organization there was but little possibility of the recruitment of new members, for villagers' sons left to form their own new villages. Their sons eventually came to comprise the core of the new chiefdoms.

In connection with the constitution of a Nyakyusa village and with land tenure, the significant feature of the chiefdom was its establishment, together with the induction of a new chief, at the great "coming-out" ceremony, *ukwimba*. In brief, each chief was succeeded by two of his sons - the eldest son of each of the senior houses of the chief, i.e., of his first two wives. At the "coming-out" ceremony, when the sons were still young men and their father was not a particularly old man, the old chiefdom was divided into two, each part coming under one of the new young chiefs. Before the critical occasion - at which much important ritual was performed - the younger sons of the old chiefdom had already moved away from their fathers villages and had established their own independent villages nearby, each one containing a group of comrade. A Nyakyusa boy from the age of about seven years could not continue to live with his father and mother, but, in company with his agemates, built his own hut on a site adjacent to the main village as "followed by the fathers' headmen. Until the "coming-out" ceremony these younger villages were under the control of the old village headmen; but with the induction of the new chiefs they achieved independent status, each with its own headmen appointed from among its members by the old headmen. Each new village was allocated a new building site and a new arable area, and (quite commonly the old villages, the elder men, moved away a little in order to give the younger men adequate access to the land, for it was considered that the young men's needs for land were paramount.

After this wholesale reorganization of the old chiefdom, where new villages were established and new boundaries demarcated,[1] the old chief himself, the old headmen and the older men (the "fathers") gradually retired from active public life. The old chief was supposed to commit suicide after a time (or was quietly killed off) in order to leave the field clear for his son; the old headmen became the religious and ritual leaders of the new chiefdoms, with the favour of older womenfolk, and the old men's

[1] See also [illegible]

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Nyakyusa

there remained scattered plots here and there which could be taken up and some existing holdings in the area are too large for the agricultural capabilities of their occupiers. The temporary safety valve was shut off. The local headman had become seriously worried over the large-scale alienation of his land resources without any equivalent increase in the number of his villagers, and he also wished to conserve the remaining land against the now better understood needs of his own people.

The principle of no land without residence also means that a villager who wishes to move most conveniently forfeits his land-holding in the village. A little earlier he would most probably have been able to retain at least his fields beyond the immediate vicinity of the houses – in so far as his new residence was not too far away to allow continued cultivation. This has been especially important for younger men who, wishing to take up a vacant holding elsewhere, also desire to retain their share of the parental holding allocated by inheritance. Conversely, they are now unable to move on to their father's holding and yet retain their fields in their own village. Such men must now make a permanent decision between the utility of, perhaps, two inadequate holdings which, however, combined together might be of satisfactory size.

As a consequence of this, inter-village opposition is probably greater than it has ever been in European times, and no less strong perhaps than it was in the old days. Men feel that the security of their holdings, the future of their sons, and the possibility of increasing their arable cultivation lies wholly within the security and stability of their own village. They tend to see other villages and other villagers as a potential threat to their own land requirements; they often suspect the worst of neighbouring villages who, they think, will, given the chance, seize some of their land. Headmen and villagers would refuse to cross the boundary into another village when they accompanied me during my investigations, lest they be accused of contemplating appropriation of the land there. Such aliens who still retained land in a village were regarded with some animosity. Nyakyusa would not look beyond their own village boundaries in an attempt to make an appreciation of the modern overall land situation. They wished only unanimously to cling to what they already had and to guard it jealously; they were only too inclined to believe that other villagers nearby were better off and to use them as scapegoats for their own difficulties and shortage. It must be said that this renewed insistence on village exclusiveness and the inviolability of village boundaries has in fact tended to make for a certain inequality of land-holding according to the perseverance and ability with which individuals claimed authority over formerly vacant lands. This condition is, however, overemphasized in most's claims today, and in any case it is tending to disappear under the pressure of inter-village movement.

The Nyakyusa village in the Lake Plains, with its intensified independence and aggressive exclusiveness, and jealous of its believed permanent boundaries, has not at the same time been able to retain its traditional moral basis. Whereas formerly the youths of a village moved to one side, there to build their own hamlet and eventually to acquire their own fields in association with its establishment as a full village in its own right, now this is no longer feasible or even possible, for the land is not available for this sort of expansion. The young men are driven back as a dependence on the fields already held by their fathers in the old village. They gradually move into their fathers' places and take over the paternal holdings; or, as we have seen, they seek, where they may to obtain new allocations in any other village where they can gain admittance. The moral basis of village living is lost.

The boys and youths still leave their fathers' houses and build their huts, small huts together on a site somewhere adjacent to the main village site,